

Video pornography

WASHINGTON — "You are General Custer. Your dander's up, your pistol's wavin', you've hog-tied a ravishing Indian maiden and have a chance to rewrite history and even up an old score. Now, the Indian maiden's hand may be tied, but she's not about to take it lyin' down, by George!

"Help is on the way. If you are to get revenge, you'll have to rise to the challenge, dodge a tribe of flying arrows and protect your flanks against some downright mean and prickly cactus. But if you can stand pat and laugh past the strings and arrows — you can stand last.

"Remember! Revenge is sweet. Every time old Custer makes a score, the more challenging the game action gets."

Are these vulgar words something the Ku Klux Klan would put together? Something a convicted rapist might dream about? The ideas of a demented mind? Well, all of those are certainly possible.

But, as a matter of fact, these words come from a kit for a new video "game," Custer's Revenge, put out by American Multiple Industries (AMI) of Northridge, Calif. Its slogan is, "When you score, you score," and its president, Stuart Kesten, says of his great original idea:

"Our object is not to arouse, our object is to entertain. When people play our games, we want them smiling, we want them laughing."

Now, to be explicit (people like Kesten like things explicit), this "game" shows a panting General Custer raping an obviously suffering Indian woman (Indians are women, not maidens, feller). I will leave it to your imagination how the game is "scored."

Kesten further defined his "game" in People magazine, where he was featured. Responding in that magazine to the National Organization for Women's complaints that his little "game" "promotes violence against women for fun" and that "it's like having a little surrogate act out the rape for you," Kesten answered smugly:

"NOW will complain about anything not showing a woman in the dominant position. We would not promote such an offensive thing as rape in a game. It's

Georgie Anne Geyer

a fun sequence where the woman enjoys being raped."

Frankly, I sat here at my desk for two hours trying to think of what to say about something like this. Indian and women's groups and decent people all over the country are protesting the game at the same time wondering whether protests only advertise it. Atari, the leading producer of home video games, gets 1,200 Custer's Revenge complaints a day because Custer can only be played on Atari's 2600 VCS unit. Charging that the company's name is being used wrongly, Atari is suing AMI.

But what does one say about this game? That it is unspeakably vulgar, obscene, and an inducement to rape? Should one follow that by wondering what is happening to our society, to relations between men and women, to common decency? Well, all of that is gratifying, but it just ain't gonna get anything done, pardner, and I think everybody is getting tired of paralysis.

It's not only that this "game" — a "game" that appeals to men's and women's darkest urges — insults American Indians, women and decent people in general. There is overwhelming evidence (as if the evidence of our senses did not tell us this long ago) that such pornography leads directly to sexual insult and assault. Kesten, quite simply, is inciting men to rape.

I think it is time to play hardball on pornography. So, why not take a trick from that brilliant organizer, the late Saul Alinsky, and attack Kesten on his own turf? Saul, a mentor of mine, used to urge his community organizations to throw the garbage not picked up by corrupt city officials on the precinct captains' lawns and advertise their peccadilloes.

For starters, why not make some posters of Kesten, printed with his wonderful quotes, and put them up around his neighborhood, or his church, synagogue or club?

If he complains, why, dear Mr. Kesten, fun is fun.

There is something else, too — people could stop buying such slop.